



Avoiding Heat Injuries

TRAVEL FACT

To protect your health when temperatures are extremely high, remember to keep cool and use common sense. The following tips are important.

Drink Plenty of Fluid

Increase your fluid intake - regardless of your activity level. During hot weather, you will need to drink more liquid than your thirst indicates. This is especially true for persons 65 years of age and older who often have a decreased ability to respond to external temperature changes. Ensure that infants and children drink adequate amounts of liquids. However, avoid very cold beverages because they can cause stomach cramps. In addition, avoid drinks containing alcohol because they will actually cause you to lose more fluid.

Drinking plenty of liquids during exercise is especially important. During heavy exercise in a hot environment, drink 2-4 glasses (16-32 ounces) of cool fluids each hour. (Caution: If a fluid-restricted diet or diuretics has been prescribed for you, ask your doctor how much you should drink.)

Replace Salt and Minerals

Heavy sweating removes salt and minerals from the body. These are necessary for your body and must be replaced. The easiest and safest way to replace salt and minerals is through your diet. Drink fruit juice or a sports beverage during exercise or any work in the heat. Do not take salt tablets unless directed by your doctor. If you are on a low-salt diet, ask your doctor before changing what you eat or drink-especially before drinking a sports beverage.

Wear Appropriate Clothing and Sunscreen

Choose lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing. In the hot sun, a wide-brimmed hat will provide shade and keep the head cool. Dress infants and young children in cool, loose clothing and shade their heads and faces with hats or an umbrella.

Limit sun exposure during the mid-day hours and in places of potential severe exposure such as beaches. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool itself and causes a loss of body fluids. It also causes pain and damages the skin. A variety of sunscreens are available to reduce the risk of sunburn. The protection that they offer against sunburn varies. Check the sun protection factor (SPF) number on the label of the sunscreen container. Select SPF 15 or higher to protect yourself adequately. Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapply according to package directions.

Adjust to the Environment

Be aware that any sudden change in temperature will be stressful to your body. You will have a greater tolerance if you limit your physical activity until you

become accustomed to the heat. When traveling to a hotter climate, allow several days to become acclimated before attempting any vigorous exercise, and work up to it gradually. If exertion in the heat makes your heart pound and leaves you gasping for breath, STOP all activity, get into a cool area, or at least in the shade, and rest, especially if you become lightheaded, confused, weak, or faint.

Monitor Those at High Risk

Monitor the condition of your travel partners and have someone do the same for you. Heat-induced illness can cause a person to become confused or lose consciousness. Certain travelers are at greater risk of heat-related illness. Infants and children up to four years of age rely on others to regulate their environments and provide adequate liquids. People 65 years of age or older may not compensate for heat stress efficiently. Overweight people may be prone to heat sickness because of their tendency to retain more body heat. Any health condition that causes dehydration makes the body more susceptible to heat sickness. If you or someone you're traveling with is at higher risk it is important to drink plenty of fluids, avoid overexertion and get your doctor or pharmacist's advice about medications taken for high blood pressure, depression, nervousness, mental illness, insomnia, or poor circulation.

Schedule Activities Carefully and Use Common Sense

If you must be out in the heat, try to plan your activities so that you are outdoors either before noon or in the evening. While outdoors, rest frequently in a shady area. Resting periodically will give your body's thermostat a chance to recover. The most efficient way to beat the heat is to stay in a cooled area. Consider a visit to an air-conditioned or fan-cooled public place for a few hours during the hottest part of the day. Avoid hot foods and heavy meals-they add heat to your body. Finally, never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car.